

The Art of Effective Communication

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Assertiveness Quiz

Directions: Read the following scenarios and decide how you would most likely respond to the situation by reading the choices below it:

1. Your boy/girlfriend tells you that he/she is really mad at you for not returning his/her calls. You realize that your roommate never gave you the messages. You...
 - A. Don't say anything about the messages to your roommate
 - B. Ask your roommate if your boy/girlfriend ever called while you were out
 - C. You get even by not giving your roommate a phone message
2. Your friend says something that hurts your feelings. You...
 - A. Say nothing and hope it doesn't happen again
 - B. Tell your friend that what they said hurt your feelings
 - C. Vow to get even with your friend or say something hurtful back
3. Your friend offers to pick up lunch for you but doesn't give you your change. You...
 - A. Assume there was no change
 - B. Ask if there was any change
 - C. Accuse your friend of trying to rip you off
4. Your co-worker asks if he can copy the answers for the training you were supposed to complete because he states he already knows how to do it and feels it's a waste of time. You...
 - A. Let him even though you are not real comfortable with the idea
 - B. Tell him you'd rather not, but you'd be glad to help him with his
 - C. Tell him you're not a cheater like him and let everyone know to "watch out for him"

5. A friend asks you to take her to pick up her car from the mechanics again but you're afraid you will miss an appointment. You...
 - a. Do it anyway
 - b. Ask her if you can do it after your appointment
 - c. Agree but purposefully forget to pick her up
6. Your parents tell you they will loan you money to help you out with a major car repair but the check never arrives. You...
 - a. Cry, beg money from friends, or just leave the car at the mechanics
 - b. Call them and say that you're concerned that the check got lost somehow
 - c. Call them and tell them that you will lose your job if they don't help you
7. You're about to have sex with someone you have been dating, but they tell you that they'd rather not use a condom. You are concerned about HIV and STD's. You...
 - a. Have unprotected sex
 - b. Tell them that you will not have sex without a condom
 - c. Tell them that you don't want to get a disease from them
8. Your significant other suggests a particular movie, but you've been looking forward to seeing a different one. You...
 - a. Go to the movie they suggested anyway
 - b. Tell them that you really wanted to see the other movie and try to decide together
 - c. You see the movie they suggested but complain about how stupid it is.

9. You are shopping with a friend and she tries on a pair of pants and asks you how she looks. You think that the pants are too small, but she sounds excited about how she looks in them. You...
- a. Smile and say the pants look great
 - b. Tell her you like the pants but suggest a different size
 - c. Tell her that the pants makes her look fat and that you wouldn't want to be seen in public with her if she is wearing them
10. Your supervisor at work gives you a bad performance review when you feel that you have performed exceptionally well. You...
- a. Go home and cry and wonder if he/she is right
 - b. Ask your supervisor to explain his/her concerns and discuss the reasons why you thought you were doing well
 - c. Rip up the review and tell all of your co-workers what a lousy supervisor he or she is

Scoring: Add up your A, B, and C responses. If you had more than two A responses, you may tend to interact with others in a passive manner, taking their feelings and thoughts as more important than your own. More than two C responses may indicate that you come across to others as aggressive. The more B responses that you had suggest a more assertive interpersonal style, where you consider the thoughts and feelings of others without discounting your own.

It is possible to communicate with others in varying ways. For example, you may be more passive with your significant other and more aggressive with your parents. Think about how you responded and how you come across to people in different situations.

(Ideas taken from Christopher L. Heffner, M.S.)

Styles of Communication

Write down key words that describe the different styles of communication.

#1 Aggressive

#2 Passive

#3 Passive Aggressive

#4 Assertive

WORD LIST DESCRIBING FOUR BASIC KINDS OF COMMUNICATION

PASSIVE

self-pitying
victim
apologetic
self-punishing
“doormat”
injured
avoiding
giving in
giving up
withdrawn
unresponsive
sacrificing
inhibited
unexpressive
no eye contact
retreating
ignoring
“sweet”
crying
helpless
anxious
martyr
insecure
timid
self-denying

AGGRESSIVE

interrupting
dominating
pushy
rude
overbearing
domineering
overpowering
violent
loud
destructive
hostile
superior
bossy
mean
thoughtless
threatening
explosive
“always right”
ridiculing
belittling
inconsiderate
“preachy”
harsh
punishing
invading

PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE

grudge carrying
resentful
spiteful
dishonest
bitter
gossipy
malicious
revengeful
unaware
manipulative
double messages
hinting
cynical
two-faced
indirect
phony
confusing
sarcastic
sulky
uneasy
fearful
anxious
condescending
insulted
devious

ASSERTIVE

clear
direct
aware
relaxed
energized
powerful
moving
real
honest
self-responsibility
open
choosing
appropriate
negotiating
listening
confident
centered
expressive
coping
flexible
comfortable
vital
self-control
considerate
competent

Observing Communication Styles

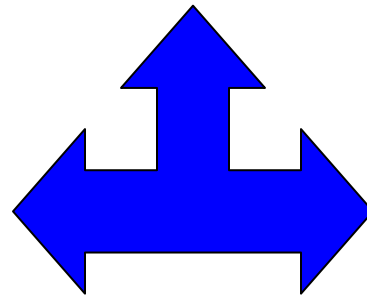
1. Describe a situation where you observed or participated in one of the four styles of communication (aggressive, passive, passive aggressive or assertive)
2. What style of communication was each individual using? How did you identify the style being used?
3. What was the outcome of the communication? Was the relationship improved?
4. Was the problem or situation resolved? If not, why?

The Basic Assertive Message

I think...

I feel...

I want...



Example: I think the project is not divided evenly. I feel overburdened and frustrated with my part of the project. I want to discuss options on how to distribute the work more evenly so it is not a burden to either of us.

Points to remember:

- Complete assertive messages include all parts.
- The balance of the feeling and thought content varies with the kind of message.
- The feeling part of the message is often omitted, because talking about feelings can be risky.
- The more intense the situation or the more important the relationship, the more important it is to include feeling content.
- The human connection takes place when feelings are shared.
- When thoughts and feelings are mixed up, the message is confusing.
- Thinking is not the same as feeling! Thoughts and feelings can be different. It is assertive to get in touch with both before communicating.
 - Thoughts are an expression of ideas, perceptions, or opinions.
 - Feelings are an expression of *emotions*

PUTTING WORDS TO FEELINGS

HAPPY

alive
amused
anxious
calm
cheerful
content
delighted
ecstatic
excited
fantastic
fine
fortunate
friendly
glad
good
great
hopeful
loving
optimistic
peaceful
pleased
proud
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
thankful
thrilled
turned on
up
warm
wonderful

SAD

angry
apathetic
awful
bad
blue
crushed
depressed
disappointed
disturbed
down
gloomy
glum
hateful
hopeless
hurt
lonely
lost
low
miserable
painful
sorry
terrible
turned off
uneasy
unhappy
unloved
upset

ANGRY

aggravated
annoyed
burned up
critical
disgusted
enraged
envious
fed up
frustrated
furious
impatient
irritated
mad
mean
outraged
rage
resentful
sore

CONFUSED

anxious
awkward
baffled
bothered
crazy
dazed
depressed
disorganized
disoriented
distracted
frustrated
helpless
hopeless
lost
mixed up
panicky
paralyzed
puzzled
stuck
surprised
trapped
troubled
uncertain
unsure
upset
weak

SCARED

afraid
anxious
awed
chicken
confused
fearful
frightened
horrified
insecure
intimidated
jumpy
lonely
nervous
panicky (ed)
shaky
shy
stunned
tense
terrified
threatened
timid
uneasy
unsure
worried

WEAK

ashamed
bored
confused
defenseless
discouraged
embarrassed
exhausted
fragile
frail
frustrated
guilty
helpless
horrible
ill
inadequate
insecure
lifeless
lost
overwhelmed
powerless
quiet
run-down
shaky
shy
sick
timid
tired
unsure
useless
vulnerable
wishy-washy
worn out

STRONG

active
aggressive
alert
angry
bold
brave
capable
confident
determined
energetic
happy
hateful
healthy
intense
loud
loving
mean
open
positive
potent
powerful
quick
secure
solid
super
tough

Words paint pictures in our heads. What is the right word to paint the right picture? Words can have different meanings to different people.

Defining Assertiveness

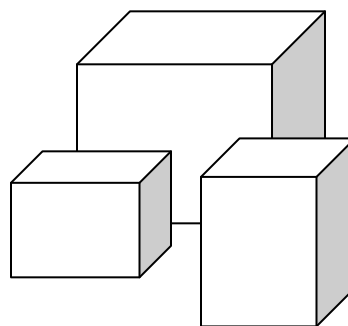
- Assertiveness emphasizes the **uniqueness** and **importance** of **each individual** and that person's **need** and **right** to maintain **self-dignity** and **self-respect**.
- To be assertive, the individual must be **aware** of and **accept** as valuable his/her own **wants, desires, values** and **expectations**.
- Interactions with **others and self** are **enhanced** by assertive behavior.

I am being assertive when I:

- **Stand up for myself:** Behaviors such as saying no, setting limits on one's time and energy, responding to criticism or put-downs or anger, expressing or supporting or defending one's opinion.
- **Express honest feelings comfortably:** The ability to disagree, to show affection or friendship, to admit fear or anxiety, to express agreement or support, to be spontaneous, all without painful anxiety.
- **To exercise personal rights:** Ability to express opinions, to work for change, to respond to violations of one's own rights or the rights of others in a calm and clear way.
- **To not deny the rights of others:** To express personal feelings and thoughts without unfair criticism of others, without hurtful behavior toward others, without name calling, without intimidation, without manipulation, and without controlling others.

The bottom line: If I express my needs without infringing or inflicting them on others, I am assertive.

BLOCKS TO ASSERTIVENESS



The Most Common Blocks

- ☐ Blaming or “It’s all their fault.”
- ☐ Inappropriate behavior or “It sounds so rude.”
- ☐ Time and apathy or “It’s more trouble than it’s worth!”
- ☐ Fear of rejection or “He’ll never talk to me again!”
- ☐ Fear of the response or “Who knows what she’ll do?”
- ☐ Fear of losing self-control or control of others
- ☐ Fear the other person can’t “handle it”
- ☐ Fear of retaliation
- ☐ Others _____

Most blocks focus on others’ thoughts, feelings, actions, words and intentions—things beyond my control? When I am inappropriately focused on others, I am not focused on my own thoughts, feelings, actions and choices. What is the result?

The block I use most often is _____

My plan for moving beyond my block . . .
